



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

September 9, 2013

Mr. M. H. Smith
Captain, U.S. Navy Commander
Department of the Navy
Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division
6149 Welsh Road, Suite 203
Dahlgren, VA 22448-5117

Re: Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren Division Outdoor Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation Activities Final Environmental Impact Statement (CEQ #20130232)

Dear Mr. Smith:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Outdoor Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) Activities at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren Division in Virginia. While the FEIS addressed most of EPA's comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), EPA would like to comment on the Navy's responses to EPA's comments on Environmental Justice/Children's Health made on the DEIS as presented in its letter of October 1, 2012.

It is noted that a number of modifications have been made to the methods used to calculate benchmark values for the identification of areas of Environmental Justice concern. These methods are an appreciated improvement over the methodology used previously. There are a few remaining issues and concerns that may be easily resolved which are noted in the enclosure to this letter.

EPA appreciates the Navy's efforts to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, and eliminate environmental impacts of current RDT&E activities and encourages continuous and rigorous monitoring and controls to ensure increased activities do not negatively impact the environment and human health over time.

Thank you for providing EPA with the opportunity to review this project. If you have questions regarding these comments, the staff contact for this project is Karen DelGrosso; she can be reached at 215-814-2765,

Sincerely,



Barbara Rudnick
NEPA Team Leader
Office of Environmental Programs

Enclosure (1)

Technical Comments

Environmental Justice Responses F003.39 to F003.49:

1. In Section 3.2.4 Environmental Justice, the following description of how minority populations are identified is found: "Identify Minority Populations – Using US Census data, identify minority communities or populations within the study area where either: a. Minority populations exceed 50 percent of the general population, or b. The minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population." The "Exceeds 50%" criterion is to be applied to the populations first. Any population that exceeds 50% minority is an area of potential Environmental Justice concern. Thus, EPA questions the use of the benchmark of greater than 50.1% minority in Table 3.2-18 "Community of Concern Thresholds."
2. Census Tract 8501.02 in Table 3.2-19 "Minority and Low-Income Communities of Concern" has a minority population of 50.1%. Please note that this value should be shown in bold print on the table. This census tract is an area of potential Environmental Justice concern.
3. Census Tract 103 in Table 3.2-19 "Minority and Low-Income Communities of Concern" has a low income percentage of 11.9%. Again, this value should be shown in bold print on the table. It exceeds the benchmark value.
4. Table 3.2-19 "Minority and Low-Income Communities of Concern" should contain the benchmark values from Table 3.2-18 "Community of Concern Thresholds" (corrected of course) for ease of assessment and review.
5. When determining the Benchmarking values for minority and low income populations, a value of the county average plus 20% was used. What was the justification of using this value of the percentage plus 20%? Why not the percentage plus 10%, or the percentage plus 5%? This choice seems to fly in the face of other thresholds developed elsewhere in the document. For example, the analyses for children use the percentage plus 10%. Why use the percentage of children in the area plus 10% as a benchmark, and then apply methodology using the percentage plus 20% for minority and low income populations? The reasoning given for the use of 10% in the assessment for children was to be protective of that population. There are children in the low income and minority populations. Why not use 10% across the board? It seems that the percentage plus 10% is much more reasonable for the protection of at risk populations.
6. Table 3.2-21 entitled "Unusual Concentrations of Children", Census Tract 8507.11 has a percentage of children listed at 29.2%. The value should be in bold print on the table. This table should also contain the benchmark values.

7. It is not clear if the census tracts of Environmental Justice concern are impacted by noise. There is little detail provided on impact to areas of Environmental Justice concern as a result of project related activities. More information is needed in identifying impacts to areas where people reside.
8. Maps with greater detail as related to the proximity of impacts to areas of population, and in particular areas of potential Environmental Justice concern would greatly enhance the FEIS.